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Sweden

Fishery Products

EC Disapproves of a Swedish Stop for Cod Fishing 2003

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Report Highlights:

The European Commission disapproves of the planned unilateral Swedish stop for cod fishing. The Commission bases its decision on the fact that a stop would have little positive effects on the cod stock and that it would discriminate against Swedish fishermen.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Stockholm [SW1], SW

In post-election discussions in Sweden last fall, the Social Democratic Party had to make some concessions to the Green Party in order to maintain its political base in the Parliament. Concessions made included the decision to stop all Swedish cod fishing for a period of two years, starting in January 2003. The date was later postponed to March 2003.

The Swedish fish industry relies heavily on cod fishing. One third of the total income (about USD 35 million) of professional fishermen in Sweden comes from cod fishing. However, over-fishing of cod in the Baltic Sea has been a serious problem for a number of years. In order to control that, the International Fisheries Commission for the Baltic Sea has established maximum quotas for cod fishing. These quotas have decreased substantially in past years. Sweden's share of the total yearly quota of 75,000 metric tons is 15,000 metric tons.

Not unexpectedly, the Swedish fishing industry reacted strongly to the Government's decision to stop all Swedish cod fishing, although it was promised compensation for lost incomes. In discussions with the Swedish Government, the industry has maintained that a total halt to cod fishing would cause great damage to the Swedish fish industry and would not protect the cod stock in the Baltic Sea. The industry claimed that the Swedish quota would be fished by other countries and then exported to Sweden.

The debate between the Swedish Government and the fishing industry was ended in late January, when the European Commission announced its disapproval of a unilateral Swedish stop for cod fishing. The Commission based its decision on new EU regulations that were agreed upon in December 2002. According to these, Swedish fishermen are allowed to use their quotas in other EU countries' fishing waters. Hence, a unilateral Swedish stop would have little positive effects on the cod stock. In addition, a stop would discriminate against Swedish fishermen, the Commission stated. The Swedish Government has chosen to give up a ban, but has decided to look for alternative measures instead. However, the Commission might, for the same reasons mentioned above, disapprove of alternative measures as well, since those would only apply on Swedish waters.